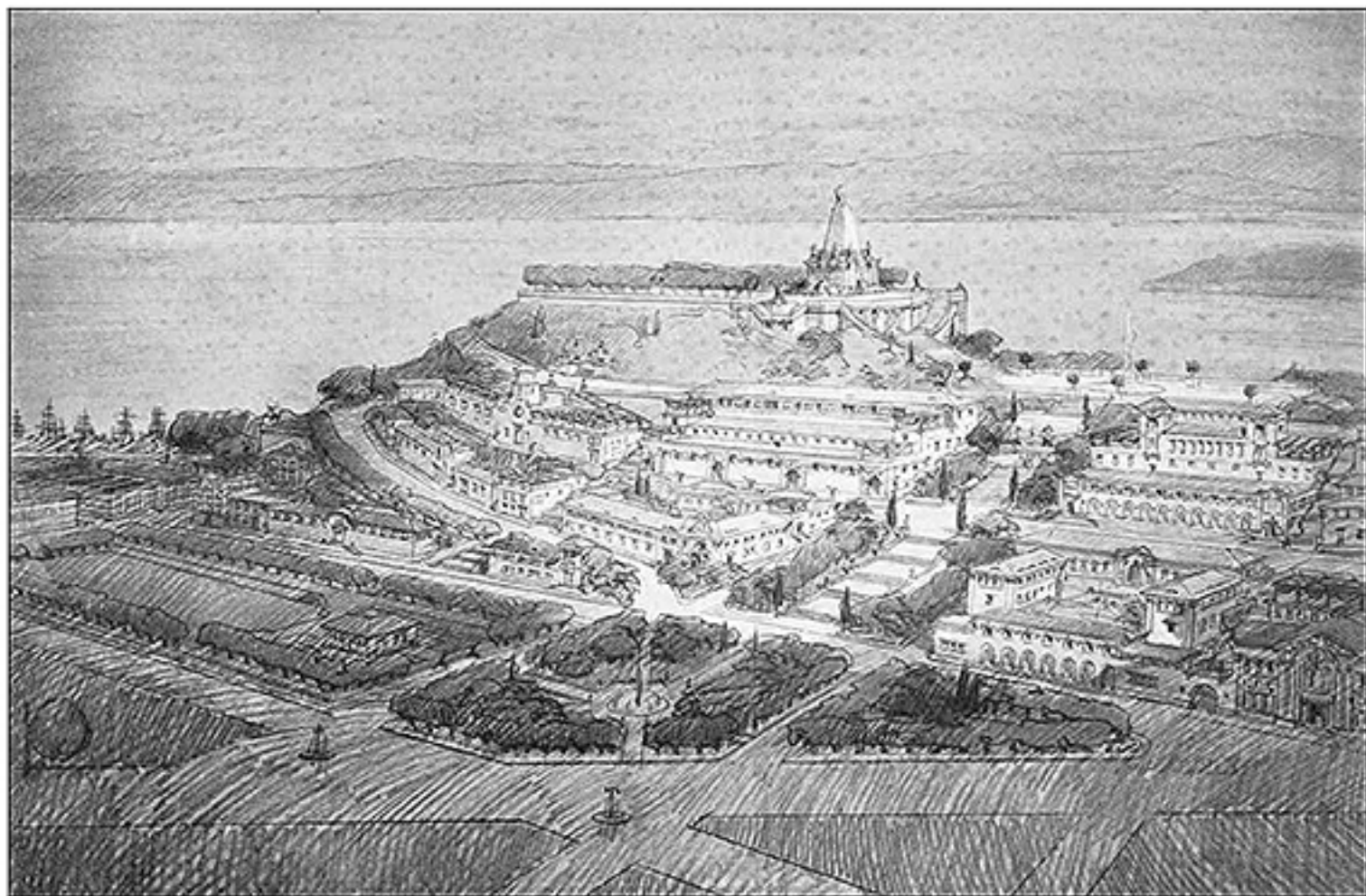


The Semaphore

A Publication of the TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS

Issue 205

Spring 2014



Update on North Beach Historical,
Architectural & Cultural Survey
See Pages 7-10

THE NEW NORTH BEACH LIBRARY



Tosca's library benefit, Jan. 27, 2014.
PHOTOGRAPH BY JASON DOIY, COURTESY OF THE FRIENDS OF THE SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY



Jeanette Etheridge, Charlotte Schultz, Kitty Margolis and friends at Tosca's library benefit on Jan. 27, 2014.
PHOTOGRAPH BY JASON DOIY, COURTESY OF THE FRIENDS OF THE SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY

By Julie M. Christensen

We tend to think of North Beach as staid and unchanging, and we love it for that. The neighborhood has been buffeted, however, by significant changes at fairly regular intervals since the street grid, complete with Washington Square, was laid out in the mid-1800s. Columbus Avenue slashed through in the 1870s. The biggest jolt of all, the leveling 1906 earthquake and fire, hit the neighborhood's restart button, but also accelerated the acquisition of land for the North Beach Playground that had started in 1903. Grid-defying Telegraph Hill Boulevard was added in the 1920s. Coit Tower was built and Montgomery Street and Calhoun Terrace were paved in the '30s.

The last big changes – the complete reconfiguration of Washington Square (leaving only Ben Franklin and Patigian's firemen unmoved), the enclosure of the North Beach Pool and the shrinking of the North Beach Playground to accommodate a neighborhood branch library – all occurred more than 50 years ago. Sometime mid-century, during the freeway and redevelopment madness, Columbus Avenue's gracious sidewalks were chopped in half to facilitate traffic volume and parking and the ficus trees we have grown to love and hate were added there and on Lombard Street.

After almost a lifetime of stasis, changes are coming again. Washington Square will get its first alteration in more than half a century with the addition of new, user-friendly restrooms (See June Frap's article, page 11). The Pagoda Theater is gone. Neighbors are working with the city to re-emphasize comfortable and safe pedestrian use of Columbus Avenue. Perhaps the most noticeable changes of all, a new library will open at the corner of Columbus and Lombard, and, next year, the North Beach Joe DiMaggio Playground will be reconfigured.

At the time of this writing, the new library is set to open in late April/early May (Check the NorthBeachLibrary.org website for updates). The new building is spacious –60 percent larger than the cur-

rent library — with separate rooms for adults, children and teenagers. It will have a community room for meetings and performances as well as (we hope) expanded branch programs. There will be more books, more seating, more computers, more light, state-of-the-art retrieval and checkout and clean, safe and accessible restrooms. The new adult and children's rooms soar with double-height ceilings. Users will be treated with views of curvy Lombard Street, Coit Tower, the spires of Saints Peter and Paul Church and glimpses of the bay.

The North Beach library is the last of 24 city branches built or renovated with the bond funds approved by voters in 2000. Bond funds, however, cannot be used for the library's contents or staffing or programs. To avoid cuts to staffing or hours as a result of this ambitious branch building boom, the nonprofit Friends of the Library has followed the library improvement program from neighborhood to neighborhood, working with volunteers to raise funds for furnishings and equipment.

A January party, underwritten by the new owners of Tosca, brought out Charlotte Schultz, Jeanette Etheridge, Jack Hirschman and a host of glitterati in support of our library. Residents of all the northeast neighborhoods gathered at a fun event in February at the Chinese Historical Society of America Museum, housed in the historic Julia Morgan-designed YWCA building. In between, La Trappe and Pisto's restaurants hosted events for the millennial crowd that bracketed San Francisco's burgeoning Beer Week.

Residents are working to raise \$50,000 to win the right to name the main reading room for Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Especially generous donations from Ghirardelli Chocolate, neighbors Maud Hallin, Anne Fung and Jeff Sternberg have given a boost to fundraising efforts. A new neighbor in the tech field has signaled his willingness to make a significant contribution.

By early March, fundraising events for the new branch had brought in almost a quarter of the



Rendering of the entry for the new North Beach Library.
RENDERINGS BY LEDDY MAYTUM STACY ARCHITECTS



Rendering of the new North Beach Library adult's area.



Rendering of the new North Beach Library children's area.



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK COMING UP IN FUTURE ISSUES

Columbus Avenue Transportation Study Update
Columbus Avenue Then, Now and the Future
24 Hours in Washington Square
Opening of Our New Library
Bike Share in North Beach
Tosca and the Square
Rails of North Beach
A Triangle Mystery
The Ellis Act
—Catherine Accardi, Editor

Questions? Comments? Ideas?
Contact the editor of *The Semaphore* at caacat@comcast.net.

\$411,000 raised out of a goal of \$667,000. In addition to naming rights for everything from chairs to rooms, a donor plaque near the entrance of the new library will recognize donors of \$1,000 and above. (To check the state of donor opportunities, go to the Friends of the Library website at <http://www.friendssfpl.org/>).

Preliminary plans for the branch's opening include events featuring local authors, music performances and a series of open houses and parties. Some neighbors are looking at ways to plan and sustain programs to take advantage of the new facilities. (For more information or to volunteer, contact Julie Christensen at Julie@SurfaceWork.com.)

After World War II, North Beach leaders struggled for more than a decade to find a spot for a branch library. After many deliberations and failed efforts, they chose the triangle at the corner of Columbus and Lombard. In the mid-'50s, incom-

continued on page 4



WATERFRONT COMMITTEE REPORT

WATERFRONT HEIGHT LIMITS TAKE CENTER STAGE



By Jon Golinger

Last year was a banner year for action on San Francisco's unique and historic waterfront. In 2013 the northern waterfront saw: the opening of the fabulous new aquatic-oriented Exploratorium and free public spaces around Piers 15-17, the construction of a new Cruise Ship Terminal and two-acre public park at Pier 27, the international spotlight (and seemingly endless drama) that accompanied the year-long America's Cup events and a citywide battle culminating in landslide voter rejection of the Port Commission's plan to raise waterfront height limits for the 8 Washington luxury-condo complex near the Ferry Building.

No Wall on the Waterfront, Part II

This year also has started with a bang. The **No Wall on the Waterfront** coalition of environmental organizations, neighborhood associations and civic groups and their leaders is now spearheading a June ballot initiative to require voter approval for any waterfront development that attempts to increase waterfront height limits through spot zoning. Within the range of waterfront piers and seawall lots that fall under the jurisdiction of the Port of San Francisco, the waterfront height limits range from 40 feet to 105 feet, with the exception of the voter-approved special AT&T ballpark height limit of 150 feet.

When the Waterfront Land Use Plan was enacted in 1997, it specified that all proposed waterfront developments and projects envisioned by the waterfront plan could be implemented within the existing height limits. Unfortunately, the current five unelected mayoral appointees who comprise the San Francisco Port Commission have treated the waterfront height limits as merely "optional" and aggressively advanced a series

of high-rise luxury condo and office tower plans that would raise waterfront height limits up and down the San Francisco waterfront. Ignoring the overwhelming citywide voter rejection of their 8 Washington height increase plans in November, the Port Commission has instead proceeded to act as if the waterfront height limits that have kept San Francisco's waterfront one of the most open, accessible and spectacular waterfronts on the planet are simply "advisory only."

Building from November's victory, in just three weeks in January more than 21,000 San Franciscans signed petitions to qualify the new initiative, the *Waterfront Height Limit Right to Vote Act*, for the June 3 ballot. In response, a group of big development interests have deployed a series of legal and political maneuvers to prevent San Franciscans from voting for this common-sense initiative. However, the diverse coalition working to ensure that waterfront height limits are not haphazardly changed has continued to expand its support across the city with this clear message: San Francisco's waterfront is a special place that belongs to all of us. Let's respect it and protect it. For more information about the waterfront initiative, or to get involved, please call (415) 410-0588 or visit: www.NoWallOnTheWaterfront.com

Port Commission stuck on 8 Washington

So far, the Port Commission has yet to accept the defeat of the 8 Washington developer's plan, and has refused to end the developer's "Exclusive Right to Negotiate" and move forward with a community process to find a better use for the Seawall Lot 351 site. At a recent public meeting, an alternative community-oriented set of ideas for the underutilized seawall lots on the northeast waterfront were presented by Asian

Neighborhood Design, which put together the "Northeast Waterfront Community Vision" after months of workshops and community outreach. However, the Port Commission has expressed zero interest in engaging with the community on any new ideas that would move forward beyond the failed 8 Washington plan. We will keep pushing.

Possible Affordable & Middle-Income Housing project on Broadway seawall lot

A potential affordable housing project for seniors and families that would be located on a seawall lot at the corner of Broadway and Davis Street across from the KGO-TV building is being advanced by the port in conjunction with the Mayor's Office of Housing. While private housing is typically not a legal use for public waterfront land such as the parcel known as Seawall Lot 322-1, the port has gone to the state Legislature and received a special exemption for this spot for a project that would house low- or middle-income residents. Telegraph Hill Dwellers is working with other neighborhood associations to ensure that if this project proceeds, it is done in a way that provides needed housing while also addressing other neighborhood needs for community services, recreation and open spaces, while also being compatible with the design and aesthetic needs of the Northeast Waterfront Historic District.

The Waterfront Needs You

The THD Waterfront Committee is looking for interested members to get involved in these and other exciting issues. If you are interested, please contact Jon Golinger at Jon.Golinger@thd.org.



Semaphore Correction:

The last issue of *The Semaphore* (Issue No. 204, Fall-Winter, 2013-2014) contained an incorrect photo attribution. The photograph on page 6 of Jenny Morningstar setting up Coit Tower's 80th birthday art show at Live Worms Gallery should have been credited to Julie Jaycox.

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FROM THE DESK OF SUPERVISOR CHIU



With the affordability, stability, health and safety of our communities at the forefront of everyone's minds lately, I am excited to share with you a few of the initiatives I have been working on that will positively impact the residents of Telegraph Hill, its surrounding neighborhoods and beyond.

Year Two of Participatory Budgeting

Last year, my office began a Participatory Budgeting program giving District 3 residents the opportunity to vote on projects that would affect change in their communities. I am very proud that the program was a huge success, and we are delighted that Supervisors Norman Yee and Malia Cohen will be implementing Participatory Budgeting programs in their districts. I would like to welcome all of you to join us for District 3's first meeting to launch the program's second year on Weds., March 26 at 6p.m. at the Tel-Hi Neighborhood Center at 660 Lombard Street. For more information about this meeting and future ones, contact my aide Amy Chan at amy.chan@sfgov.org.

Preparing for Earthquakes and Other Emergencies

As we all know, we live in earthquake country. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Loma Prieta earthquake, and the next big earthquake is not a matter of if, but when. So we must be prepared. In 2010, I championed an earthquake safety infrastructure bond that passed with nearly 80 percent of the vote. Now I'm supporting the new Earthquake Safety and Emergency Response Bond (ESER 2014), which the Board of Supervisors placed on the June ballot. ESER 2014 will provide \$400 million for critical seismic upgrades to neighborhood firehouses and police stations. It will also fund needed repairs to the emergency firefighting water system and move crucial forensic labs and the medi-

cal examiner's office out of their seismically deficient location. ESER 2014, which came out of the Capital Planning Committee on which I sit, is expected to create more than 3,500 jobs for San Franciscans and will make these vital safety improvements with no increase in property-tax rates.

Landmark Plastic Water Bottles Legislation Passes

On March 4th, the Board of Supervisors voted unanimously in support of my proposal to phase out the sale of plastic water bottles on city property, including buildings, parks and public streets. It will apply to large events (more than 100 people), permitted vendors and lessees on city property, as well as to city departments. The ordinance was in development for almost a year as I worked with city departments, event planners, environmentalists and others to create a proposal that is fair and pushes us to address our addiction to plastic bottles. I am proud of this first-in-the-nation legislation and look forward to San Francisco continuing to be at the forefront of major environmental initiatives.

Creating Pathways for Tenants to Purchase

In February, I introduced a formal request for our city attorney to draft Right-of-First-Refusal legislation. At a time when too many tenants receive eviction notices after learning their buildings have been sold, the Right of First Refusal would give tenants or their nonprofit partners the chance to make an offer on the sale of their buildings. Washington, D.C., Baltimore and Florida already have similar laws. Tenants are given notice that the property will be for sale and have a specified time in which to match sale terms. I'm calling for this legislation because we need to do more to put housing in the hands of tenants and residents and stop real-estate speculators from displacing families. If enacted, the Right of

First Refusal would stabilize the residential diversity of our neighborhoods and create long-term affordable housing for those most in danger of eviction.

I am also looking for ways to expand revenue for the Small Site Acquisition Fund to assist tenants in purchasing their buildings. I look forward to working with the housing community to develop the legislation, including identifying buildings and neighborhoods where this program would be most successful.

Reducing Pharmaceutical Prices

With the high number of seniors on Telegraph Hill and its surrounding neighborhoods, I am keenly aware of the difficulties they face from the rising cost of prescription drugs. It's not only a problem for residents, but for the city -- tax dollars that should be used to help schools, improve Muni, or make neighborhoods safer instead go to pay drug manufacturers for excessive costs. I recently held a hearing on skyrocketing pharmaceutical prices and what we can do to affect change from a municipal level. The board voted unanimously on a resolution I sponsored to move our city forward with the next steps on this issue. I am committed to continuing to explore this issue, as more than 80 percent of voters created a mandate for action in supporting Proposition D in November 2013.

As always, please don't hesitate to contact me or my staff with any questions, suggestions, or concerns.

Office of Supervisor David Chiu
President, San Francisco Board of Supervisors
City Hall, Room 264
San Francisco, CA 94102
Phone: (415) 554-7453
Fax: (415) 554-7454



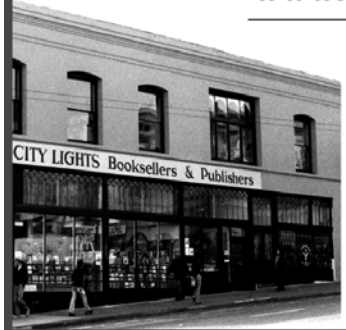
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OBITUARY FOR MASHA ZAKHEIM

MAY 19, 1931 — FEB. 12, 2014

Masha Zakheim created a remarkable identity for herself. Energetic and expressive, she gave numerous talks and lectures on the art, architecture and history of San Francisco. Synonymous with Coit Tower, and a City Guide docent for many years, she was connected with the California Historical Society, the Stock Exchange, the S.F. Art Institute and the murals at the Beach Chalet, the City Club and UCSF. She had a clear and enthusiastic, knowledgeable way of engaging with and drawing out her audience.

Through her company, Articulate Art: San Francisco of the 1930s, Masha specialized in Mexican muralists and local New Deal art, in addition to championing the work of her father, the outspoken Jewish-Polish Coit Tower artist Bernard Zakheim. Her authoritative book, "Coit Tower: Its History and Art" — published by Volcano Press, was integral in keeping this iconic landmark on the map. Her book, "Diego Rivera in San Francisco," was published in Spanish in 1998.

Masha was born in San Francisco to artist Bernard Baruch Zakheim and interior decorator Eda Leah Spiegelman, both from Poland, on May 19, 1931 — at noon, as she liked to tell it, on a Tuesday, when the weekly air siren sounded. In 2006, the date was designated Masha Zakheim Day by the mayor of San Francisco.

Along with her then-husband Don Jewett (they were married in 1954), Masha spent several years in England, where her first child was born. In 1956, she got a Master's degree in English from UC Berkeley.

With her lively intellect and love of words, Masha inspired scores of students during her 25 years as a



Masha Zakheim
COURTESY OF THE FAMILY OF MASHA ZAKHEIM

tenured English and Humanities instructor at City College and a teacher at San Francisco State University. For 20 years after retiring she was actively involved — the City College Academic Senate recognized her in 2008 for keeping the on-campus Diego Rivera mural "in the public eye, and for her scholarly efforts in capturing the stories of her native city."

Masha embraced the arts personally and professionally, supporting the symphony, opera and theater and running the student ushering program at City College.

Thoughtful, motivated and always there for people, she was very social and an excellent cook. Her New Year's open-house parties,

with hundreds of guests, were legendary.

Masha travelled the world, always with a focus: she visited churches where Bach played and did a walking pilgrimage in Japan, a country she was drawn to. She often hosted Japanese students in her home.

As one friend said: "Masha was a mentor; she just connected. She had a great passion for life. Masha really lived."

Masha died February 12 after prolonged illnesses, with us, her daughters Leah Royall and Bethany Stark, at her side in Los Angeles. She was the sister of Volcano Press publisher Ruth Gottstein, art conservator Nathan Zakheim and Matthew Zakheim; and grandmother to Yale, Julian, Copeland and Dare.

We are grateful to have had a mother who was so supportive, articulate and upbeat (one of her favorite words).

A memorial will be held in early August. Please contact leahroyall@inoutbox.com

Donations to ProtectCoitTower.org preferred.



WHEN THE COCKETTES PLAYED THE PALACE

June Osterberg, long-time North Beach resident, journalist and historian, has graciously provided *The Semaphore* with the article, "When the Cockettes Played the Palace," which she wrote for the September 2003 issue of *North Beach Beat*. It is

a companion piece to "Theater on the Square," which appeared in the Fall-Winter 2013-2014 issue of *The Semaphore*. Thank you, June, for your many contributions over the years.

—Editor

New North Beach Library *continued from page 1*

ing Mayor George Christopher instead decreed that the library would be placed on "free land," initially at Washington Square, but eventually at the North Beach Playground. Neighbors, including the founding generation of the Telegraph Hill Dwellers, protested, but the project moved ahead. Fifty years later, with both the library and playground desperately needing upgrading and expansion, the saga has played out again: years of searching for sites and a decade of controversy and angst. Yet a new library will open this year. An expanded, refreshed, greened and revitalized playground will connect to it next year. In another half-century, those who come after us will appraise the job we did in our tenure as stewards of this wonderful neighborhood.



When the Cockettes Played the Palace

Second of two parts

In Part 1, Flashbacks explored the history of the Powell/Columbus site of the "old theater building" that has fallen on hard times, to the distress of many.

The August Flashbacks went back to about 1895 when the important location on Washington Square was occupied by the elegant Russian Orthodox Cathedral, which was destroyed in 1906.

FLASHBACKS

By June A. Osterberg

When the Washington Square Theatre was built in 1909 it was the first of several theaters to brighten the west side of the already historic park.

The theater was established for live performances. It was followed by the Milano Theatre, which showed

American motion pictures. The Milano was replaced by the Palace Theatre just before World War II, which fulfilled its role as North Beach's popular movie house for decades.

A Chinese movie theater opened on the spot in 1967, and that was the beginning of a new era. The marquee had borne the name Palace for so long that when the new owners wanted to rename the place they chose another six-letter name to fit

the sign. The name Pagoda went up.

However, there was so much continuing affection for the traditional Palace that the name eventually morphed into the Pagoda Palace. The theater showed Chinese films and occasionally live Chinese opera.

Not long after the old theater

— See Page 4

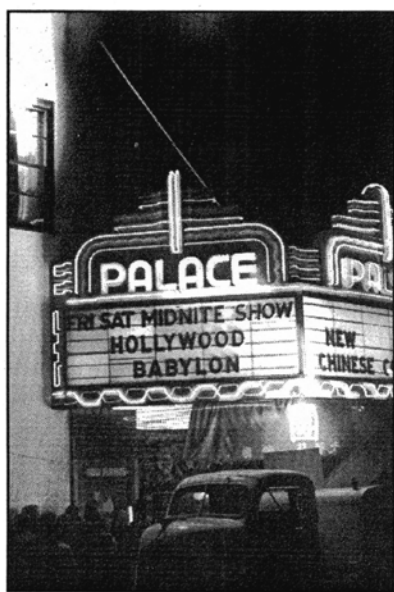


PHOTO BY BLAIR PALTRIDGE 1970 COURTESY OF RUMI MISSABU, COCKETTES STAR AND ARCHIVIST

The old Palace Theatre was ablaze in neon back in the '50s and '60s.

► *Chinese cinema and bawdy shows* — From Page 1

had taken on its new character, a remarkable dual personality took shape. Starting in 1969 the Cockettes, a talented and uninhibited troupe of performers in drag, created a sensation with their original, outrageous "midnite shows."

When moviegoers who had come to see the Chinese films would file out of the last show about midnight, there would be a crowd of people on the sidewalk outside, waiting to enter the theater for Nocturnal Dream Shows. They would start about 12:30 and go until 2:30, except on Halloween, when the show lasted until after 4 a.m.

The shows had names like "Pearls Over Shanghai," "Circus of Life" (subtitled "The Rudest Show on Earth"), and "Smacky and Our Gang."

On the screen there would be films such as Laurel and Hardy in "The Chimp," "You'll Never Get Rich" and "Night of the Living Dead."

Both straight and gay people filled the theater every night that the Cockettes were playing. Tickets were \$2 or \$2.50. The hilarity went on into 1972.

The Pagoda Palace continued to show Chinese movies and occasional live Chinese opera until late in 1985.

The Renaissance-Rialto theater chain took over in 1986, refurbished the old building, took back the name Palace and opened the theater as a repertory movie house.

The first movies featured were two filmed in San Francisco: "The Maltese Falcon" and "Dark Passage." They were shown at a \$10-a-person fundraiser to save the Grace Marchant Garden on Telegraph Hill.

The repertory operation was short-lived on account of poor attendance, and the name Pagoda Palace reappeared.

Sometime in the mid-'90s the theater building was acquired by a reputed Hong Kong billionaire. Not long after, the building was gutted, and nothing of the old Art Deco objects and furnishings remained. Not the ticket booth, not the curving stairs, not the valuable dance floor upstairs.

This was done in an attempt to convert the building to retail use. In late 1995 a mini-mall was proposed for the space, to general consternation. The unpopular prospect was opposed by the community and did not materialize.

Commenting on the "insensitive alteration," the Foundation for San Francisco Heritage Newsletter stated in its March/April 1998 issue: "... Only the pylon that bore the colorful neon blade sign and a canopy barely suggestive of the marquee (which had been previously modified) remain to suggest its original character..."

After the mini-mall was thwarted the Rite-Aid drugstore chain sought to open a jumbo outlet in the old building. Neighborhood residents rallied successfully against that, too, believing that a large late-hour drugstore selling liquor was inappropriate for the prominent location on Washington Square.

The community welcomed the effort by Doug Ahlers of New Orleans that followed. His ambitious plan was to rename the building Muriel's Theatre and show live theater. The audience would have been able to dine while watching a performance.

But the dot-com collapse and the economic nosedive doomed that scheme despite the huge investment that had been made to return theater to the old theater building.

So now the earthquake-retrofitted building stands there, looming over Columbus Avenue with its empty vertical sign, its new roof gleaming in the sun, awaiting its next incarnation.

A group of investors has been meeting this year, and many high hopes ride on the possibilities. The old theater building is still a tantalizing opportunity for people with imagination, courage and deep pockets. •

E-mail the writer:

jaosterberg@northbeachbeat.com

MASHA ZAKHEIM COIT TOWER & DIEGO RIVERA MURAL EXPERT, DIES

By Carl Nolte

San Francisco Chronicle

Feb. 15, 2014

Masha Zakheim, an expert on San Francisco's Coit Tower and its famous murals, died Wednesday after a long illness at the home of one of her daughters in Los Angeles. Ms. Zakheim was 82.

She was the daughter of Bernard Zakheim, a noted San Francisco muralist and one of the artists who worked on the noted Coit Tower murals.

Ms. Zakheim was also an expert on the work of Diego Rivera, the famed Mexican muralist, and helped to preserve the work he did in San Francisco in the 1930s.

She wrote two books on public art in San Francisco, one a widely praised book on Coit Tower and its murals and the other on Rivera, his friends and his work in San Francisco.

Ms. Zakheim was particularly devoted to Coit Tower. She spent more than 25 years as a volunteer docent at the tower and trained other docents and local tour guides in its history and significance.

"What a gift Masha gave to every San Franciscan by writing what has become the Coit Tower 'bible' that we have all learned so much from. She will be deeply missed," said Jon Golinger, chair of Protect Coit Tower, a preservationist organization.

Ms. Zakheim was born in San Francisco in 1931 and held a bachelor's degree from San Francisco State College and a master's degree from UC Berkeley.

She taught English and humanities at City College of San Francisco for 25 years, and when she retired in 1991, the college's academic senate passed a resolution praising her academic work and especially her efforts to help the public understand the Rivera murals on campus.

She is survived by two daughters, Bethany Start of Los Angeles and Leah Royall of London; a sister, Ruth Gottstein of Volcano (Amador County); and three grandchildren.

A memorial service will be held later this year.

Reprinted with permission from Carl Nolte

<http://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Masha-Zakheim-Coit-Tower-and-Diego-Rivera-mural-5238887.php>

THD Oral History Needs Stories and Volunteers

Do you know someone whose story should be told? Are you interested in the narratives of North Beach and Telegraph Hill? Do you want to tell your story? If so, then the Oral History committee is looking for volunteers to seek out stories that capture the lives that have enriched and contributed to our sense of place, culture and identity. We would be especially delighted if you shared stories that contribute to our varied cultural, ethnic, economic, spiritual and gendered heritage. Please contact Carlo Arreglo of the THD Oral History Project at auntiestrophe@gmail.com

WHEN THE COMMITTEE WAS IN SESSION

By Art Peterson

The late, venerated *San Francisco Chronicle* culture critic John L. Wasserman was a man not given to unstinting praise. So when, in the late 1960s, he said of The Committee, the improvisational comedy group that had taken up residence at 622 Broadway in 1963, that it included “the most creative group of people the city has ever seen,” you can be sure that he meant it.

Such praise was probably more than Alan Myerson could have expected, when, as a member of Chicago’s groundbreaking improv group, Second City, he came west with a young crew of comics. There were five of them—average age 23—joined by the then-emerging San Francisco Renaissance man Scott Beach, who at 32 was the company’s graybeard.

Sam Shaw, the founder and director of the San Francisco Improv Festival, and his partner Jamie Wright are making a film about the group, “The Committee—A Secret History of American Comedy.” Shaw says that Myerson came west specifically to create a more politically based improv form, rather than duplicate the observational humor that was the Second City’s forte.

Myerson arrived at the right place at the right time. Making the rounds of the cocktail party circuit inhabited by the Bay Area intelligentsia, he pitched his project. Prominent psychiatrists and stars of the UC Berkeley faculty became his backers, allowing the newly formed group to take up residence in a 300-seat theater at the former Italian club, the Bocce Ball. The San Francisco writer Herb Gold, another of the backers, remembers the early audiences as being a collection of “hangers out, college kids, old beatniks and liberal dentists.”

Then the word got out. The edgy comedy The Committee was offering melded perfectly with the early ’60s San Francisco zeitgeist. Original cast member Larry Hankin remembers when, one Saturday night, he was urged by a fellow cast member to come outside the club, and “there was a freakin’ line around the block and it was like that like every Saturday night from then on.” The group was soon doing 13 shows a week. The investors were handsomely rewarded and the actors, who were stockholders in the venture, were in the top 10 percent of Actors’ Equity earners.

The performers were loving what they were doing, but it was hard work. “We rehearse all day and perform all night,” was the common gripe delivered with a smile.

What the cast members were creating was something akin to jazz, particularly in the 20 minutes of grooving on themes that grew from audience suggestions following the one hour of semi-prepared skits. There was a parlor-game quality to these segments that audiences found involving. In one format, the audience would suggest a word and the troupe would pick up on it, each, in turn, introducing a new word with the last letter of the previous one. When an audience member yelled out “stop,” the drama began, using that word as a starting point.

The actors needed to stay nimble. The newspapers were required reading. Myerson recognized that “things that were pertinent a month ago, are not necessarily pertinent now.” “The trick,” said cast member Don Sturdy, “is never to plan anything in detail.” “Improv is



Barbara Bosson in front of The Committee Theater at 622 Broadway, circa 1967.

COURTESY OF SAM SHAW

like Russian roulette,” Scott Beach added.

While politics was very much front and center, a revisit to the sketches from that period would provide a time capsule insight into life in the ’60s: there were pieces about encounter groups, wife swapping, litterbugs and horror movies. Audience members, who never quite got the pantomime of the French mime Marcel Marceau, could find solace in a performance delivered by a Marceau stand in, silently portraying pain, fear, love and anguish, all with the same expression.

The performances often ended with a group musical, sometimes with a political bent. For instance, an aria drawing on Rachel Carson’s “*Silent Spring*,” with references to insecticides and detergents, but at other times the musical finale would take the form of a mock Italian opera with everyone dead at the final curtain.

The Committee’s main mission was to afflict the comfortable. In one skit, a governor, prison chaplain and prison warden are sympathetically wringing their hands about the fate of a prisoner about to be executed.

When the electric chair goes on the fritz, the trio beat the man to death by hand. Some of their routines—like two “sportscasters” doing a play-by-play of a battle in the Mekong Delta, were dismissed by critics such as Stanley Eichelbaum of the *Examiner* as “preaching to the choir.” Still, these segments gave the choir fodder to engage in their own preaching.

The group’s members were also activists outside the theater. When anti-Vietnam rallies took place on the UC Berkeley campus in 1964, The Committee was there along with Joan Baez and Dick Gregory. In 1968, Myerson was arrested for demonstrating at Santa Rita prison. “Jails exist to absolve people of

responsibility,” he believed.

By the mid-’60s, The Committee had spread its wings. It opened a theater on the Sunset Strip in Los Angeles (where most of its surviving members live today). They had gigs in venues as disparate as Berlin and Austin, Texas. They had a run in New York, overcoming what their producer, Arthur Cantor, called that city’s “reliance on tax-deductible people, tourists and



Promo art for The Committee original revue with the first cast.

CREDIT: COURTESY OF SAM SHAW



(Left to right) Sam Shaw, State Senator Mark Leno, Committee founders Alan Myerson, Latifah Taormina and Jamie Wright.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SAM WILLARD

prices that kept out the younger crowd.” In one of those bursts of entrepreneurial creativity that characterized the group, they ran up against New York’s regulations forbidding them to sell alcohol in a theater. They solved the problem by giving booze away. The group also ventured into television, performing on the “Flip Wilson Show” and many times on the “Dick Cavett Show.” Before its demise in 1973, it is estimated that The Committee had performed before 5 million people, including a 1966 “Satirathon” at the Broadway venue in which 3,000 people were admitted in shifts until the remaining disappointed line-standers had to be sent away at 6 o’clock in the morning.

During its nine-year run, The Committee turned in new directions. Shaw believes that the group took a turn from “civil rights to more drug-oriented material,” which seemed to mirror a change in the direction of society. Two suburban housewives, for instance, were cast in an LSD-inspired dialogue.

The major change, however, was the group’s adoption of “the long forum,” known, for debatable and obscure reasons, as “The Harold.” The Harold was improv with-

continued on page 6

SPRING IN THE GRACE MARCHANT GARDEN

By Larry Habegger

New Plaque Honoring Gary Kray

If you have wandered down the Filbert Steps to the Grace Marchant Garden in the past few months, you may have noticed a new plaque at the garden's main gate honoring the late Gary Kray, who died in September 2012. It's an honor that Gary richly deserved, one that the Friends of the Garden began planning shortly after his death, and finally put in place a bit more than a year later.

The plaque is the handiwork of Gil Hernandez of



New plaque honoring Gary Kray.

PHOTOS BY ÉRNE MCCABE

South Bay Bronze, who has spent decades creating and installing bronze plaques around the city, including the Barbary Coast Trail markers.

The Kray plaque was made possible through the generosity of Bryan and Erica Martin of Omaha, Neb., Bill Lambert and Keith Reed of San Diego, and Telegraph Hill residents Paul Scott and Firouzeh Attwood. Filbert Steps resident Joan Levin also had a small brass plate engraved in Gary's honor that will be affixed to the sign honoring Grace Marchant above Darrell Place. We plan to have it in place by spring.

Spring Growth in the Garden

During the past year, head gardener Paula McCabe and I, along with occasional volunteers, have made changes in the garden that regular visitors will notice. We removed ferns and undergrowth that were crowding the roses and ground cover, especially around the garden's perimeter, and made the garden paths more defined. We did this to make the space more accessible, and to encourage visitors to stay on the paths and avoid trampling delicate plants. We're also reclaiming areas at the garden's edges that became overgrown with ivy and bramble in Gary's later years when he was slowing down.

As with any garden, weeding is a constant necessity. Some patches will require regular attention for a few years before we get the weeds under control. In the meantime, we've opened up more areas for better sightlines, added flowering plants and moved some for



Plaque installers on the day it was placed. Left to right are Gil Hernandez, Al Habegger, Paula McCabe and Larry Habegger.

increased sunshine. We expect this spring's blooming season to be as beautiful as ever, in honor of Gary and Grace before him. Take a walk down the steps sometime and see.

The Committee *continued from page 5*

out a net. A suggested word from the audience, say "Cuisinart," might lead to an unplanned set-up involving an incompetent Cuisinart repairman that would embark the players on a 45-minute adventure in communication and miscommunication. Done badly, of course, this can be taxing for spectators. Shaw believed that done well, the form allowed audiences to see the creative process at work in a way that other art forms did not.

By 1969, some think The Committee had lost its political edge. Myerson said that "now politics is too frightening for satire." Larry Hankin added, "We can't attack the sacred cows any more because the sacred cows are attacking each other." At any rate, it was difficult to make fun of the slaughters in Vietnam and Biafra.

The group was losing money by the '70s, the audience was declining and there was somewhat of a consensus that the improv form had become stale.

The shuttering of The Committee says nothing about the importance of the group in the history of American comedy. Most all of its members went on to significant second acts. Carl Gottlieb was to write the great American comedy, "The Jerk." Gary Goodrow has had credit in more than 50 films, and, perhaps most significantly, a key role in the 1973 production of "The National Lampoon's Lemmings," at New York's Village Gate where he worked with the then-undiscovered John Belushi and Chevy Chase. This production Shaw sees as establishing a direct connection between the

revolutionary work of The Committee and the emergence of "Saturday Night Live."

An even more direct connection to SNL can be seen in the career of Del Close, the "mad scientist" director of The Committee in the mid-'60s. After leaving The Committee, he returned to Chicago and in the years following became the "house metaphysician" for "Saturday Night Live," coaching the likes of Tina Fey, Billy Murray, Mike Myers, Stephen Colbert and Gilda Radner.

Even with his later prominence, however, Close could look back on the San Francisco scene of the '60s as providing a perfect storm for generating the off-center comedy The Committee was offering. His colleagues recall how he would sit at a table at Enrico's and comment on the passing scene. "San Francisco," he would say, "is the only place in the world where certifiable crazies are performing as functioning members of society."

Sam Shaw and Jamie Wright would like Semaphore readers to help them with their work. They are looking for relevant anecdotes, recordings and images as well as leads to folks who have knowledge of those rich comedic days in our city. Backers and producers will not be turned away. You can contact Sam Shaw at samshaw@sfimprovfestival.com

For those who want to check out the state of improv today, circle the dates of September 10th-20th when the San Francisco Improv Festival will be holding forth at the Eureka Theater, 215 Jackson St.

Art Peterson is the author of "Why Is That Bridge Orange? San Francisco for the Curious" available at locals bookstores and from Amazon.



Larry Hankin in front of 622 Broadway in 2012.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMIE WRIGHT

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UPDATE ON THE NORTH BEACH HISTORICAL, ARCHITECTURAL & CULTURAL SURVEY

Introduction by Nancy Shanahan

San Francisco's beauty, livability and international reputation depend, in part, on preservation of its historic resources. Preservation, in turn, depends on public education and the wide availability, to both city planners, public officials and residents alike, of solid, professionally conducted and accepted historic research.

In the Winter 2013 issue of *The Semaphore*, we provided an update on the background and progress of the North Beach survey and a revised Historic Context Statement. After years of professional and volunteer work — initially led by the Telegraph Hill Dwellers with the sponsorship of San Francisco Architectural Heritage, then by the Northeast San Francisco Conservancy under contract with pre-eminent architectural historian Michael Corbett — we are pleased to report that the North Beach Historic Context Statement has been completed and submitted to the Historic Preservation Commission to guide the evaluation of historic resources in the city's planning and preservation efforts.

NORTH BEACH HISTORICAL, ARCHITECTURAL & CULTURAL SURVEY

Prepared by Michael Corbett

This time we will share the following excerpt from the “North Beach, San Francisco Historic Context Statement” on the significance of the 1906 earthquake and recovery to North Beach as it is today.

Earthquake and Visions for Recovery

The earthquake and fire of April 18, 1906 devastated the neighborhood, leaving only one house, the shell of St. Francis of Assisi Church and a few scattered brick walls within what is normally called North Beach. A number of houses also survived on the east side of Telegraph Hill. The house that survived was the Giovanni Costa mansion, at the southwest corner of Lombard and Kearny streets: “Giovanni Costa, his son, Enrico Costa, and a faithful retainer named Benedetto Pagani . . . literally covered every exposed portion of the house and outbuildings with carpets and rugs soaked in wine and kept the tapestries wet during the hottest portion of the blaze, which licked up all around them in its fiery path” (*San Francisco Chronicle*, May 19, 1907). It is not known when the Costa house was demolished; Sanborn maps show it still standing in 1913, but no longer there in 1949.

In the aftermath of the disaster, there was enormous uncertainty about the future of the city at large.

Would the city rebuild? Would it be different? Where would the various districts of the city be — produce markets, offices, shopping, hotels, theaters, entertainment, vice, etc.?

One immediate possibility was the realization of the Burnham Plan of 1905 — a plan to remake San Francisco more like Paris — approved by the Board of Supervisors just before the earthquake. In a magazine article published only a few weeks after the earthquake, John Galen Howard, one of California's most respected architects, endorsed the adoption of the Burnham Plan (Howard 1906:535). For the vicinity of the North Beach district, some of the most extensive and elaborate proposals were made. Near the North Beach district would have been the Outer Boulevard, which would follow “the lines of the waterfront . . . over the warehouses, its roadway forming their roofs”; this would have run east of Telegraph Hill and curved across the north edge of the city (Burnham 1905: 53).

As part of a citywide “System of Circuit and Radial Arteries,” existing streets would have been designated and new streets created; these would have been adorned in various ways such as regulated “heights and architecture of structures . . . commemorative monuments, fountains, etc.” Affecting North Beach, Montgomery Avenue would have been cut through the heart of the business district to Mission Street. From Montgomery Avenue and Broadway would be a new northwesterly diagonal to Bay and Hyde streets and beyond. Another southeasterly diagonal would connect Montgomery Avenue to the Ferry Building. A curvilinear street along the base of Russian Hill would run just west of North Beach (Burnham 1905: opposite p. 44, 73, 179).

One of the most spectacular elements of the plan was the treatment of Telegraph Hill: “This hill is of historic importance and could only be removed at a great cost. It is recommended to leave it intact as to mass, to reform the street system gradually by terracing and planting streets impassable to traffic and, in general to make the hill more habitable. The principle approaches . . . lead to a contour road inclosing a park proposed for the summit.” The summit “would be an admirable location for a monument symbolic of some phase of the city's life.” An illustration of the “suggested Architectural Treatment” of Telegraph Hill included the entire area below the monumental hilltop, ranging down to Stockton Street, with a few grand plazas, stairways and large structures like university buildings; where there were hundreds of small lots with houses, flats and businesses before, there would be about a dozen institutions. Where there was a grid of streets and alleys, there would be a completely

new arrangement of wide, ornamental streets designed for the topography and views (Burnham 1905: 131, 146, opposite 146).

Immediately west of this Telegraph Hill plan was a two-part plan for Washington Square and a large playground (described as a small park) north of it occupying the three full blocks from Union to Lombard between Stockton and Powell streets. No mention was made of the planned North Beach Playground just west of this proposal. The design of the proposed playground followed the guidelines for the General Treatment of Parks, with terraces, “a consistent type of architecture of the greatest simplicity,” statuary in parterres, formal tree planting, steps and balustrades: “in the smaller parks this amounts to a lesson of order and system, and its influence on the masses cannot be overestimated.” The playground would include oval-ended men's and women's gymnasiums, a field house, a children's ground and a ball field. Tree planting and sidewalks would orient the playground and Washington Square to each other and to the re-imagined Telegraph Hill (Burnham 1905: opposite 111, 145, and 146).

Ironically, even without the earthquake and fire, if the Burnham Plan had been fully executed, it would have largely destroyed the North Beach district. For North Beach, the Burnham Plan was a plan for removal of a working-class neighborhood.

As in most parts of the city, those recommendations were largely abandoned as frightened property owners insisted on the security of the old boundaries of existing streets, lots and blocks. At the same time, there were other proposals, some based on or inspired by the Burnham Plan. One month after the earthquake, the North Beach Improvement Club met to support the proposal of the mayor's Committee of Forty for wider streets and to build a streetcar line on East Street (the Embarcadero) from the Ferry Building to the Presidio — the same route as Burnham's Outer Boulevard (*San Francisco Call*, May 19, 1906). In July 1907, the Board of Supervisors approved the extension of Montgomery Avenue (Columbus) at both ends, as proposed in the Burnham Plan. On the north end, it was to be extended from Beach Street to the waterfront. On the south, it was to be extended below Market Street (*San Francisco Examiner*, Jan. 22, 1907). Neither of these extensions was made. An editorial in the *Call* in July 1907 supported the revival of proposals by James G. Fair in the 1890s to establish large manufacturing plants on the north waterfront: this development would require “hotels and apartment houses for the accommodation of those who have employment in the great industrial hive, which will be established on North Beach (*San Francisco Call*, July 8, 1907). Much later, the creation of Telegraph Hill Boulevard along contours rather than the grid in 1923 and the completion of Coit Tower at the top of the hill in 1934 were both realizations of ideas that began with the Burnham Plan.

Transit Lines and Utility Infrastructure

Along with buildings, the earthquake and fire also damaged or destroyed the urban infrastructure of streets, sidewalks, water mains, sewers, gas and electrical lines and transit lines. Bond issues were quickly passed to repair the streets and sewers and to build a new high-pressure water system for fighting fires. Parallel to these public efforts were the private reconstruction of the sidewalks, water mains, gas lines and electrical lines. All of these were essential to occupying buildings.

Fire Limits and Building Laws

Although public intervention in



Figure 17—The Burnham Plan

IMAGE CREDIT: SAN FRANCISCO HISTORY CENTER, SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY

continued on page 8

NORTH BEACH HISTORICAL, ARC

continued from previous page

the form of the Burnham Plan was rejected, new city and state regulations played an important role in the rebuilding of North Beach. First of all, no new permanent construction could begin until the New Building Law took effect on July 5, 1906 (Tobriner 2006:200). Under the building law, the city was divided into areas that were either within the “fire limits” or outside of them, with different types of construction required or permitted in the two types of areas. North Beach itself was crossed by the boundary line of the fire limits. The fire limits defined the area within which fire-resistant building materials and methods were required — all construction had to have brick or reinforced concrete exterior walls. For North Beach, the area within the fire limits consisted of all property south of the center line of Broadway from Sansome Street to Cordelia Street (an alley just west of Stockton, formerly called Virginia Place). This included the Columbus Avenue corridor to its beginning at Washington and Montgomery. The fire limits also included all property south of Greenwich and east of Sansome — the warehouse district at the eastern base of Telegraph Hill.

In the area outside of the fire limits, it was permissible to build in materials that were not considered fire-proof. Thus, areas outside the fire limits were largely built of wood because wood was cheaper. A secondary effect of these requirements was that individuals were by far the most common builders outside the fire limits, whereas the more expensive structures required inside the fire limits were often built by real-estate development companies, investors and institutions.

In addition to the building laws, the area was subject to a new type of law governing multiple-unit residences, known as tenement-house laws and as hotel-and-lodging-house laws. The San Francisco Tenement House Ordinance was passed in July 1907, a year after building resumed under the new post-earthquake building law. This was followed in July 1909 by the State Tenement House Act (San Francisco Housing Association 1911: 76). Then, in 1913, they were joined by the State Hotel and Lodging House Act. Each of these laws was subsequently amended.

In general terms, these laws meant that most permanent construction in North Beach after the earthquake, specifically wood construction, followed the same rules as before, rules that many people were familiar with. It meant that new construction within the fire limits, which remained unchanged in this part of the city, was similar to what went before. Regulations for wood-frame buildings presented in Part XI of the Building Law: Provisions Relating to the Construction of Frame Buildings, were not extensive. Key features were requirements for “2 × 4 inch studs, 16 inches on centers,” ratios of the width of brick foundations to their height including their use as retaining walls, partitioning of attics for fire safety, use of bridging in stud walls “to prevent the passage of fire and smoke,” and reference to sheathing (San Francisco Board of Public Works 1906: 83-86). Because of the vast amount of work being done in a short time, and the existence of only a “chief with three field inspectors and two clerks,” the building laws could not have been properly enforced (Corbett 1980: 25). Less than two weeks after permanent building officially resumed, the *San Francisco Call* reported on a report of Commissioner Maestretti to the Board of Public Works: “The number of buildings and the rapidity with which they are being erected makes it impossible for the board to send around its inspectors to pass

upon their safety” (*San Francisco Call*, July 18, 1906).

However, the laws also brought complicated new considerations to the building of multi-unit buildings. The context in which these laws emerged, their contents and their impacts are discussed below as part of the story of the reconstruction of the district.

Reconstruction — First Steps

For some time after the earthquake of April 18, 1906 and the three-day fire that followed, housing was the most urgent problem throughout the city. Immediately afterward, some moved in with friends and family in surviving houses in San Francisco and the Bay Area: for example, “Many of those who lived in what was known as the ‘Latin Quarter’ in the district have located on the flat north of Filbert Street between Van Ness Avenue and Octavia Street, a section that was not damaged” (*San Francisco Call*, June 2, 1906). Some moved away. Many, including most of the poor and working classes (who made up most of the population of North Beach), as well as a cross section of all classes, lived in tents.

As soon as the fire was out, families began camping in the parks: “Tents were provided in the first days by voluntary agencies, by the subcommittee on housing the homeless, by the Army and by the American Red Cross.” A photograph captioned “First tents in Washington Square” records this brief phase. Social and sanitary problems led to the intervention of the U.S. Army, beginning with the division of the city into Civil Sections. North Beach fell into two sections, with that area north of Union Street, including Washington Square, placed in Civil Section III and the area south of Union Street in Civil Section IV (Russell Sage Foundation 1913: 70, facing p. 286).

About six weeks after the fire, on June 6, 1906, the Army took over the park and began operating Official Relief Camp No. 21 in Washington Square, including a hot meal kitchen. Tents were occupied rent-free for about seven months. Each camp was run by a Camp Commander “under military discipline” (Russell Sage

Foundation 1913: 78, 82-83, 404).

Efforts to build more permanent housing were delayed “because . . . emergency needs had first to be met.” Then delays were caused by shortages of money; shortages of building materials, especially lumber; the loss of planing mills; shortages of teamsters to deliver materials to building sites; “abnormal prices asked for labor”; “difficulty of securing reliable contractors”; “destruction of deeds”; uncertainty about the future; “tardiness of insurance adjustments”; “repudiation of liability”; and political wrangling (Russell Sage Foundation 1913: 216-217). In addition, it was not legal because no building permits could be issued to build until the new building law was passed July 5, 1906.

Temporary Buildings

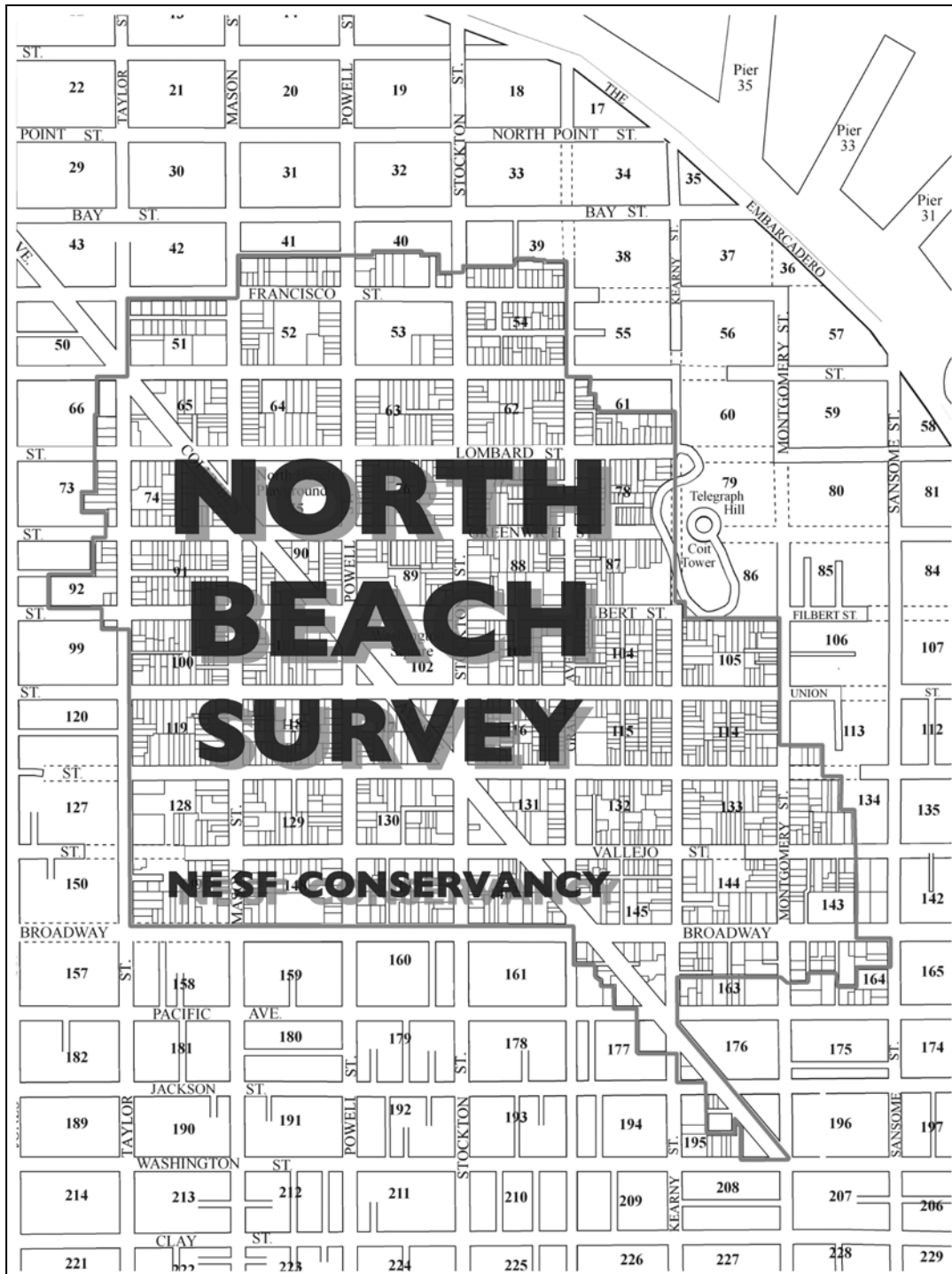
Nevertheless, there was substantial immediate construction in North Beach. Right away, many Italians returned to “the same house lot, though in shelters improvised from tarpaulins, boards, sheets of tin, corrugated iron,” and other possible, though unusual materials (Russell Sage Foundation 1913: 74). According to Richard Dillon: “Rebuilding had begun only a week after the last flames flickered out,” citing as examples two houses at Greenwich Street and Gerber Alley owned by Frank Bacigalupi; Bacigalupi appears to have replaced those early shanties under a building permit for new construction on Oct. 19, 1907.

Dillon claimed that there was so much construction in North Beach while the Burnham Plan was still under consideration, that the plan itself “was thwarted by North Beach. That sector had rebuilt too fast for such a plan to be implemented” (Dillon 1985: between 40 and 41, 159-160). Because the most vocal opposition to the plan came from downtown property owners and the newspapers, who barely mentioned North Beach in their arguments (e.g., *San Francisco Call*, May 23, 1906), this would appear to be an exaggeration; at the same time, opposition in North Beach may have been a factor.

One week after the fire was extinguished, the newspapers began reporting that “some businessmen, especially retailers and mechanics, were ready to build temporary structures on their ruins in the burnt district, but were delaying because they feared to proceed without an official permit.” Trying to facilitate immediate needs without compromising the long term, the mayor stated: “within the burnt district any one is free, without permit except from the owner of the property, to erect a one-story wood or iron temporary building in which to resume business” (*San Francisco Chronicle*, April 28, 1906). Within two more weeks, this policy was being abused and violators were threatened with arrest. Already, two-story buildings were rising and many supposedly temporary buildings were being built as permanent structures (*San Francisco Call*, May 11, 1906). From May 19 to July 2, 1906, 16 building permits were issued for construction in North Beach, perhaps techni-



Figure 16 — Ruins of North Beach post-1906 earthquake and fire. IMAGE CREDIT: SAN FRANCISCO HISTORY CENTER, SAN FRANCISCO



North Beach Survey Map.

COURTESY OF THE NORTHEAST SAN FRANCISCO CONSERVANCY

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1906 earthquake and fire.
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cally for temporary buildings.

The most extensive construction of temporary buildings — or at least of buildings built before it was legal to build permanent buildings — was in North Beach. On June 2, 1906, more than a month before adoption of the New Building Law would make it legal to build permanent

structures, the *Call* reported: “there are now a great number of new buildings, plain, but comfortable, which furnish homes for many who will have protection against climatic changes until such times as they can rebuild more expensive structures . . . That the people who are having temporary homes reared are manifesting a desire to do better when conditions will permit is apparent from the fact that they are building on the rear of their lots and clearing away the front for future improvements” (*San Francisco Call*, June 2, 1906). On June 13, 1906, the mayor reiterated his warning that violators of the temporary building policy would be arrested (*San Francisco Call*, June 13, 1906).

Then, two weeks after the new building law was approved and the legal construction of permanent building commenced, the Board of Public Works announced that they were preparing to give 30-to-90 day notices for the removal of temporary buildings. Commissioner Maestretti gave two reasons for this requirement: that temporary buildings and buildings built without permits were “of flimsy construction” and that “insurance . . . companies are refusing to write risks in menaced districts” — in other words, nobody can get insurance if there are substandard buildings in the neighborhood. Moreover, “As the matter now stands the commissioner fears that influence will be exerted to preserve the wooden buildings and in time it will be hard to cause their removal” (*San Francisco Call*, July 18, 1906).

Most of the temporary buildings in North Beach were residential buildings, many of them at the rear of lots. From a review of Sanborn maps, aerial photographs, building permit applications, and published notices, it appears that there are 75 to 85 cottages in the rear of North Beach lots that were built in 1906 and that may originally have been temporary cottages. Most of these are not visible from the street.

In addition to residential buildings, however, temporary commercial structures for stores were also built, especially along Columbus Avenue where, according to the *Call* on June 2, 1906, “a number of stores are opened for business.” For example, Zabaldano’s Pharmacy and the Buon Gusto restaurant were among the tenants of a multi-unit building for stores at Columbus and Jones; and “a building for the Fior d’Italia restaurant at the northeast corner of Broadway and Kearny Street” was almost completed one month after the fire (*San Francisco Chronicle*, May 24, 1906). One last effect of this temporary commercial construction was the shifting of North Beach businesses from Stockton, Mason and Powell streets to Columbus Avenue (*San Francisco Examiner*, May 20, 1906).

The largest temporary structures were built along the waterfront and at the north end of North Beach for industries, immediately providing large numbers of jobs at the edge of the neighborhood. Globe Grain & Milling Company, Vulcan Iron Works, Joshua Hendy Machine Works, A. Merle Company (iron beds), the Pacific Cereal Association factory, the Britton & Rey typographical plant, the Bellingham Bay Company lumber yard, the McNicoll & Company elevator factory and many small businesses and industries were housed “along the bay front of North Beach between Russian and Telegraph hills,” constituting an amount of building activity that was “probably greater than in any other sec-

tion of San Francisco” only one month after the fire went out (*San Francisco Chronicle*, May 24, 1906).

Although legally they were temporary structures, built without code requirements or inspection by the Board of Public Works, according to the *Chronicle*, “The Temporary buildings are of great variety and it is notable that some of them are of great beauty . . . as far as their external appearance goes, many of the new temporary structures have every appearance of great durability . . . most of the temporary structures are stout and durable, anything but flimsy” (*San Francisco Chronicle*, Dec. 20, 1906).

As for the interiors, the *Chronicle* said, “many of them are handsome and sumptuous. Many of the newly reopened cafes, offices and shops although only temporary, are much more artistic and attractive than the old permanent ones which were burned out” (*San Francisco Chronicle*, Dec. 20, 1906).

The beauty and durability of many of these buildings contributed to an ambiguity over their status that lasted for many years. Originally, all were to be demolished after 90 days, then extended to two years. However, if the permanent home of a business wasn’t ready at the end of the time limit, the city often did not force the business out of its temporary home. The longer this went on, the harder it was to get rid of them. An incident in 1917, in which three temporary structures built after the earthquake caught on fire and killed three firemen, called attention to the ongoing problem (*Architect and Engineer*, 1917).

Permanent Buildings

Once the building law was approved, construction began rapidly in North Beach. Because North Beach north of Broadway had been almost totally of wood construction, it was consumed by the fire except for a few brick walls (and the Costa house). The totality of destruction was, ironically, an advantage because: “There was little to clear away but ashes before rebuilding began” (Emerson 1907: 195). This was in extreme contrast with downtown and other large areas where months of hauling away bricks, iron, stone and other materials was an expensive, time consuming and energy-draining operation that delayed reconstruction.

Only one week after permanent construction legally resumed, a *Chronicle* headline claimed, “Hundreds of Residences and Seventy-five Apartment Houses Going Up” (*San Francisco Chronicle*, July 13, 1906). The rapid and busy pace of construction continued for months. On Sept. 1, 1906, the *Chronicle* said, “The busiest portion of the city today is the northern, or what was known as the Italian quarter. There are more teams and men at work there than in any other part of town” (*San Francisco Chronicle*, Sept. 1, 1906).

There were several reasons why construction began

so quickly in North Beach. While access to building materials was a severe problem elsewhere, especially in working-class residential neighborhoods, A.P. Giannini, president of the Bank of Italy, used old connections among Italian ship captains to buy and bring as much lumber as possible from Washington and Oregon to North Beach (Nash 1992: 34, James 1954: 29).

While access to money for building was uncertain in most parts of town, especially for working-class people, for different reasons two North Beach banks were able to release money to account holders and loan money for building. Giannini, in particular, was praised as a leader in the reconstruction of North Beach, who, in his words and actions, stimulated the early rebuilding by the local population (James 1954: 28-31; Bonadio 1994: 35-36; *San Francisco Call*, July 12, 1908). Also, Andrea Sbarboro, head of the Italian American Bank, wrote: “We were particularly fortunate in being able to supply our clients with money for replacing their homes as soon as they were ready to build. This accounted for the promptness with which the people of North Beach were able to replace their homes and rebuild their quarter before any other section of the city” (Sbarboro 1911: 192).

While it has been addressed citywide, the role of insurance in rebuilding North Beach is not fully understood (Todd 1929: 162-205). Richard Dillon said in general terms that the insurance companies paid off in North Beach (Dillon 1985: 159). The *Call* reported that for “the flat between Telegraph Hill and Russian Hill . . . even the earthquake clause companies have paid their policies there. They came to the conclusion that that particular part of the big fire was not an ‘Act of God’ and so they paid for it” (*San Francisco Call*, Aug. 26, 1906). It also appears that insured property owners in neighborhoods like North Beach and the Mission benefitted more than others because the size and value of new buildings in these areas was comparable to those that were destroyed. Although few insurance companies paid the full value of their policies, the proportion they paid was a substantial part of the cost of the new building. For example, if owners of a destroyed two-story house worth \$1,500 received an insurance payment of \$1,000, that was a substantial part of the cost of a new house or two-flat building.

This was not the case in neighborhoods like the Tenderloin below Pine Street or South of Market where the fire limits requiring fire-resistant construction, were extended into areas that previously were mostly wood houses and flats for working-class populations like North Beach. In such neighborhoods, owners who received \$1,000 for a wood house that had been destroyed were not allowed to rebuild in wood. Instead, they had to build much more expensive structures of

continued on page 10



Figure 19 — Washington Square 1906 early refugee camp with tents.
IMAGE CREDIT: SAN FRANCISCO HISTORY CENTER, SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY

HISTORY EXPO HAS RECORD ATTENDANCE AND THD WAS THERE!

By Julie Jaycox with assistance from Katherine Petrin

Just got back from the 2014 History Expo at the Old Mint. A mélange of history groups and neighborhood associations, the public library and city park rangers, people in period costume (including Emperor Norton, mistaken at least twice for Aaron Peskin!) and

postcard collectors, walking tour guides and cable-car aficionados —it was a great place to spend a rainy weekend.

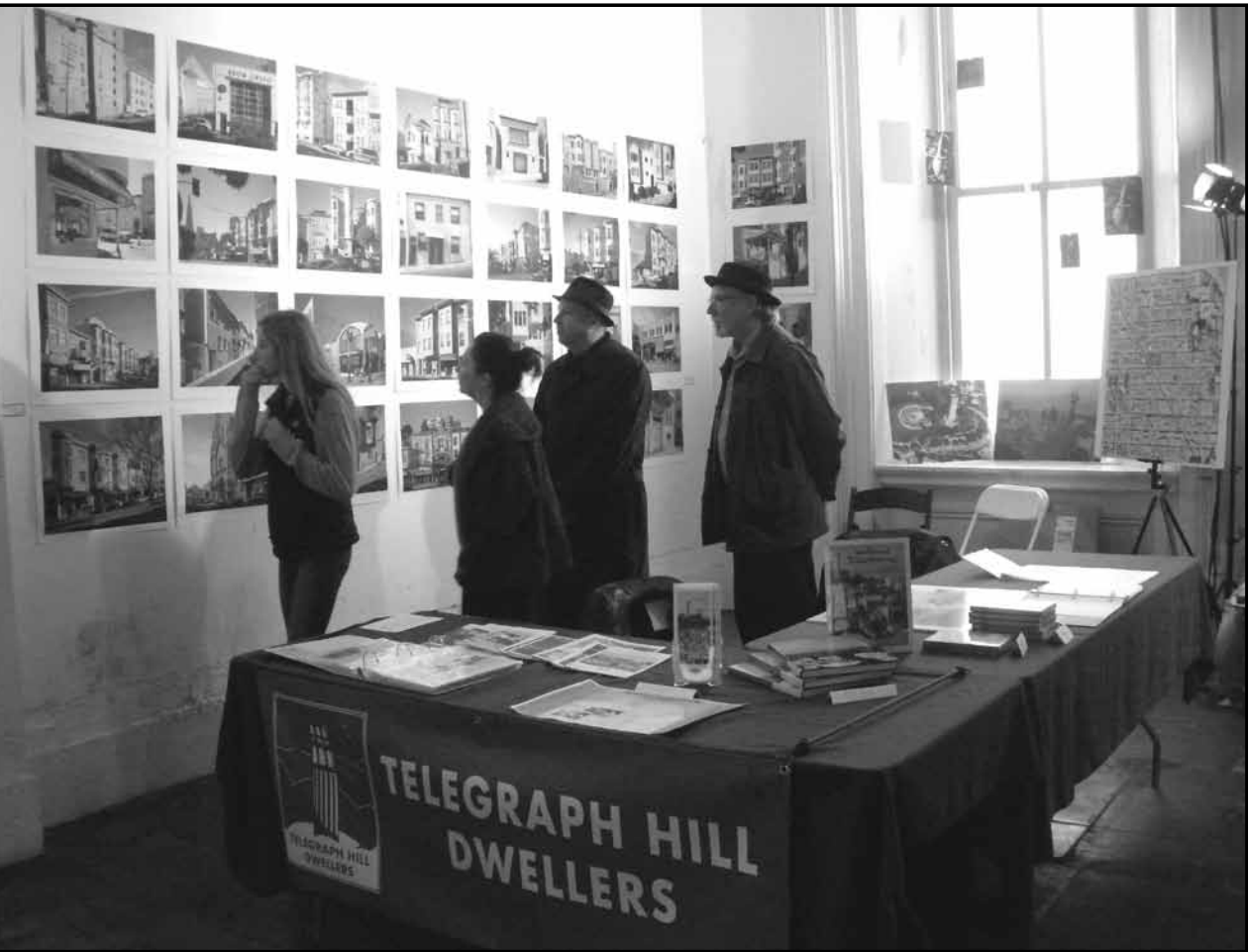
After just a few years, the number of participants in the History Expo has basically doubled. While THD has traditionally had its own room for display-

ing images of the 1906 earthquake and fire or the Coit Tower murals, this year we shared a huge room with at least four other local groups because there are no longer enough individual rooms to go around.

Because we knew we would be displaying a lot of photographs by Dennis Hearne, we asked for a wall — and we filled it up! Dennis has been photographing the neighborhood for years, making very beautiful straight-on photos of North Beach and Telegraph Hill historic resources (old buildings, in preservation terms). He has generously donated his time — shooting, printing, hanging and hanging out with us at the Expo. He has made the event both more beautiful and more personable and we really can't thank him enough, but we try. In looking at these photos, it's evident that things have already changed since he took some of them — an added garage here or a fancy paint job there -- so it's great to know that we can continue to look at what has gone before through his work.

His pictures also support and illustrate the North Beach Historic Context Statement written by architectural historian Michael Corbett, author of "Port City." The Historic Context Statement outlines the neighborhood's patterns of historical development, and social and cultural history as represented by historic properties. Part 1 of the Historic Context Statement ran in the Winter 2013 issue of *The Semaphore* and Part 2 is published in this issue.

THD's booth at the History Expo was generously set up, run for two days, and taken down by many volunteers, who also got to enjoy the event and talk to many interested and interesting people doing various forms of historical research all around San Francisco. More than 100 copies of THD's 56-year-old quarterly publication, *The Semaphore*, were provided by editor



Dennis Hearne talks with History Expo visitors about his photographs of North Beach and Telegraph Hill.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JULIE JAYCOX

continued on page 11

Historical Architecture Survey continued from page 9

brick, concrete and steel. Because \$1,000 was only a small part of the cost of such a structure, many could not afford to rebuild, but sold their lots to wealthier individuals or to real-estate developers. A secondary consequence of this situation was that it took longer to rebuild on a property that had to go through a sale and for which more complicated architecture and engineering had to be prepared. All of this illustrates an advantage of North Beach in rapidly rebuilding after the earthquake and fire.

An intangible characteristic of North Beach that many observers remarked upon was the nature of the largely Italian population. According to Rose Doris Scherini in her study, "The Italian American Community," "Other factors contributing to the early rebuilding of North Beach included the presence of a number of skilled masons and construction workers among the Italians, their sense that North Beach was 'their' district; their legendary thrift and frugality with the consequence that many had small savings to be matched by bank loans; and their own mutual aid societies. This episode may also reflect a special attachment to place, to one's own property" (Scherini 1980: 22; see also Dondero 1953: 88-89). Various observers noted that the residents of North Beach didn't procrastinate, but began rebuilding as soon as it was allowed (*San Francisco Call*, April 14, 1907); they rebuilt on their own without outside constraints: the people of the district "have built up their own houses without regard to labor union restrictions or contentions" (Emerson 1907: 196). According to the *Call*, seven weeks after legal permanent building resumed and at the height of the rebuilding frenzy, "The Italians have set about their own home building with determination . . . Every man is his own carpenter north of Broadway, and he also evolves the architectural finishes out of his own head" (*San Francisco Call*, Aug. 26, 1906). A year later, the *Chronicle* reinforced this observation for North Beach: "perhaps a larger proportion of dwellers there may claim to have had a hand as well as a voice in the construction of their houses than is the case in any other district of equal architectural quality" (Stellman 1907).

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NEXTVillage

By Jacqueline Zimmer

"Can't tell you what a relief it is to have had your help. I could not have done it without you!"
—Priscilla

That's a quote from one of our members who received some great help in her home from NEXT volunteers who got on ladders to change lightbulbs and helped connect some cables and cords to her VCR during our bi-annual "One Hard Thing" event.

Welcome to **NEXT Village San Francisco**. Located in the northeast quadrant of San Francisco, we are a non-profit, volunteer organization that works to help older adults to age in place. We also believe in reducing social isolation and building community by hosting social, cultural and educational events. Here's our service area:

- North Beach
- Telegraph Hill
- Russian Hill
- Polk Gulch
- Marina
- Northeast Waterfront

An AARP study shows that nearly 90 percent of older adults would prefer to stay in their homes as they age. NEXT can provide support to help make that happen. We are a "volunteer first" organization, and we strive to meet our members' requests for service with a "NEXT neighbor," a Village volunteer. Interestingly, a number of our members also volunteer for NEXT!

Member benefits include:

- Consultations, at the member's request, with a geriatric social services worker, to assess the member's needs and offer helpful advice that can ease concerns and provide important referral information.
- Transportation to health appointments, grocery



Grocery shopping via City CarShare- That's how we roll!
COURTESY OF NEXTVILLAGESF

stores and social events.

- Cultural, educational and social activities.
- In-home support, friendly visits, health and wellness support, simple home maintenance and repairs, technology support and more.
- Access to our growing list of vetted providers and service companies.

In an effort to attract more volunteer drivers, we're

excited to announce that we have partnered with City CarShare to provide free CarShare memberships to volunteers who make themselves available for 12 hours per quarter. All costs associated with providing transportation to our members are covered by the plan, and volunteers are then free to use the car at their leisure.

Some upcoming events include:

- Drink & Draw art class
- Sid's Salon Movie Night
- Scrabble Thursdays
- Ella Fitzgerald Day
- Advanced Directive Day
- Tours of the new PUC Building and other museums
- Soup Salons

Check the calendar on our website for more information, or join our mailing list for updates.

In our quest to build a diverse community, we offer a range of memberships that appeal to a broad spectrum of potential members, and results in a depth of membership that reflects our community. There's a membership level for everyone!

1. Single or two-person household, \$600, includes a full range of benefits
2. Associate Membership, \$150 (limited services)
3. Subsidized Membership for those whose income is \$48,500, includes the full range of services
4. Sustaining Membership, \$600 tax-deductible (no services, social only)

We're proud to be a membership-driven, grassroots organization that enables individuals to remain connected to their community throughout the aging process. Call us to learn more, join, or volunteer at (415) 888-2868, or e-mail at Jjones@nextvillagesf.org.

Or visit our website at <http://www.nextvillagesf.org>.



NEW RESTROOMS TO BE CONSTRUCTED IN WASHINGTON SQUARE

By June Fraps

The long-awaited new restrooms for Washington Square will be coming this spring. Construction is due to begin in early May after the demolition of the existing building. The new facility will have more stalls, drinking fountains, ample lighting, a bulletin board and increased Recreation and Parks storage. If all goes well, the new building will open in mid-October 2014. Portable facilities will be in place during construction.



NEW RESTROOM FOR WASHINGTON SQUARE

Washington Square was selected to receive a newly renovated or replacement restroom facility funded through the 2008 Clean & Safe Neighborhood Parks Bond. Several options were presented at two community meetings. Feedback from the community clearly outlined the desire to replace the existing facilities with one having more stalls, drinking fountains, ample lighting, bulletin board, increased Rec and Park storage, and the elimination of niches. The new design responds to all of these concerns. The roof configuration drains the roof to one point to allow for ease in future rainwater collection.



Washington Square restrooms drawing and proposed site plan.
COURTESY SAN FRANCISCO RECREATION & PARKS DEPARTMENT

NEED A RIDE TO THE GROCERY STORE?

Shop-a-Round offers rides to grocery stores for seniors and people with disabilities. In the North Beach/Telegraph Hill area, the van service operates Friday mornings, picking up riders between 10 and 11a.m., then taking them to Trader Joe's and Safeway. The cost is \$2 per trip, or \$1 with a Senior Clipper card. The driver will help riders to and from their doors with a maximum of three bags of groceries. To register for the program, call Roxana Lara at 415-351-7052.

History Expo

continued from page 10

Catherine Accardi and eagerly picked up by visitors to the Expo. Thank you to Dennis Hearne, photographer extraordinaire, Al Fontes, Andy Katz, Jon Golinger, Jen Haeusser, Judi Powell, Judy Irving, Julie Jaycox, Katherine Petrin, LynnieRabinowitch, Monica Hayes, Mike Madrid, Nancy Shanahan, Scott Elliott, Stan Hayes, Paul Weber, Richard Zimmerman and Steve Rabinowitch. Apparently, we topped the list with the most volunteers at the event this year! Yea for enthusiasm!



Jen Haeusser talks about North Beach with a Myrick book customer.

FRIENDS OF WASHINGTON SQUARE

Meet on the 2nd Tuesday every month, with work parties in the Square every quarter. See website for times, dates, locations.

www.friendsofWASHINGTONsquare.com



RESTAURANT REVIEW



Pisto's Tacos

1310 Grant Ave., San Francisco, CA 94133
415-317-4696

By Carol Peterson

In a changing San Francisco, trendy restaurants reflect the transformation with sky-high prices, but there is one restaurateur in North Beach who refuses to buy into the movement. I reviewed Pete Mrabe's Don Pisto's when he first opened and the title of the revue was, "New Street Food Eatery has Finger on the Pulse of the Economy!" Now, he has done it again!

Pisto's Tacos is mere blocks from the very successful Don Pisto's, but it is a very different eatery. Pete wanted to open a taco restaurant that was less formal, with inexpensive dishes and a cold rawbar. This lighted, refrigerated, glass bar, manned by two bartenders who serve drinks, offers prawns and sashimi, cherrystone clams, \$1 freshly harvested oysters, cerviche and my favorite Tombo Tuna Tacos. They are a hi tuna poke, with chili-infused oil and avocado, nestled inside a homemade, crisp but tender, taco shell. All these are less than \$12. Every night, Pisto's Tacos runs out of oysters, so go early if you want to indulge in this unheard of daily special.

There are only six categories on this simple, inexpensive, but complicated menu. Of the small plates, the Diablo Wings (8) caught my eye. These ingredients, as with all Pete's ingredients, are organic and fresh. He soaks the wings in buttermilk, coats them with smoked dry chilies, sugar, charred garlic, white wine and butter, then to the grill. Because of the buttermilk soak, they fall tenderly off the bone.

Of the tacos, there are six different kinds and all are less than \$3.75. They are a perfect choice for a shared meal. I tried all of them, but because no one does meat like Pete, for me, the Carnitas (\$2.75), with slow

braised pork, arbol salsa on homemade slender, delicate tortillas, was the winner.

There are only three large plates, all less than \$20. Because I am a big fan of the pork steak at Don Pisto's, I chose the Spicy Lamb Chop (\$19). I have never had a lamb chop like this. The three chops are salted and brined in chilies, lemon juice, cilantro, black pepper and oil for 24 hours, which tenderizes them. Then they are grilled and served with a delicately shaved radish salad. A perfect combination. When I asked Pete about his unique meat, he said, "In order to get meat tender, you have to brine it. In a way, I do every step in a way used to create a cold cut, but I omit the preservatives." The other feature on the large plate menu is vegetarian Enchiladas (\$12). The description on the menu hardly does it justice. Pete said, "I didn't want the usual sloppy preparation a generic Mexican restaurant served. I wanted to create an innovative dish that I would want to eat." The oblong dish has rice, enchiladas, freshly diced tomatoes, guacamole and mole sauce, including cinnamon and cumin that define the dish. The dish is sprinkled with two kinds of Mexican cheese, but unlike most Mexican places, the cheese is sparse, so the flavors meld. This is the most unusual vegetarian dish I have ever had and could easily be a favorite when dining at Pisto's Tacos.

The Siete Mares (\$12) is the ultimate fish stew. The stock is made of shrimp and lobster shells, roasted bones and whatever can enhance the flavor (Pete wastes nothing). The bowl is full of scallops, mussels, shrimp, zucchini, fish, corn and potato. It is the broth that brings it all together though.

Since my early days in Mexico, Pozole soup has always called me whenever it is available. Usually there is too much hominy in the dish, but not at Pisto's Tacos. His exceptional version comes with a chili verde

sauce. Bits of pork shoulder, combined with hominy and a rather thick green sauce broth, made with radishes, cilantro, onion and chilies, making for a hearty, luscious soup.

A further note: Don't leave the restaurant without ordering the Mexican Street Corn (\$5). The corn is lightly coated with homemade mayonnaise, then with Cotija and Mexican parmesan cheese. Then it is grilled and served in large half sizes, but you might be tempted to eat two.

When I asked Pete how he was able to keep his prices so low, yet have such delicious food, he said, "I worked in a restaurant in New York, when I was a young man. The owner was very careful about not wasting anything. Anything that wasn't used was cooked for something else. Nothing was thrown out wastefully. From that I learned to create dishes using everything. For example, a Mary's Organic Chicken is \$1.69 a pound. Her chicken breasts are \$4 a pound. So, for example, instead of buying the breast, I cut up the chicken and use the chicken breast for a Don Pisto's dish, the wings for our Diablo wings, the thighs for the taco dish, the bones for stock, etc. It makes perfect sense to create your menu to avoid waste."

The restaurant is open Monday through Saturday from 10a.m. to 10p.m., and will shortly start including some breakfast items.

Pete Mrabe has done it again. Unlike high-priced restaurants that come and go, expect Pete to spread his tentacles around the city, as he has great food, good prices and an uncanny ability to keep his costs down. By the way, like Don Pisto's, there is no sign out in front. I asked Pete why and he grinned and said, "Why not?"



PARKS, TREES & BIRDS REPORT



By Carlo Arreglo, Parks, Trees & Birds Committee Co-chair

The Great Backyard Bird Count, a joint project by National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, took place February 14-17 and I hope you had a chance to participate.

One Hill Dweller was very generous in opening his home and sharing his garden where I had spectacular and sweeping views of the Bay Bridge, the Exploratorium, downtown and the waterfront. Why were we counting birds? Besides the ever-present hope of being the first to spot a rare bird never or hardly ever seen within San Francisco, we simply wanted to enjoy being outside interacting with nature, and birds are generally the most visible representatives of wild nature (as many of you know from a certain wildly popular book and film on the "Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill").

Counting these birds and inputting the data onto eBird, a data collection website run by the Cornell Lab, helps build long-term datasets and gives scientists a



Townsend's Warbler
PHOTOGRAPH BY CARLO ARREGLO

picture of population variance. Data can provide clues on some pressing issues such as climate change, bird

disease and species distribution in cities, suburbs and rural areas.

A diminutive and hyperactive Ruby-crowned Kinglet scolded us and gleaned leaves. A delightful Townsend's Warbler bathed about five feet away. I felt awful for a majestic adult Red-tailed Hawk with a missing primary feather being mercilessly mobbed by angry crows and escorted from Telegraph Hill. These moments are probably the real reason we bird.

If you'd like to learn more about birds or just enjoy the neighborhood in a different way, please join me for a monthly Golden Gate Audubon Society field trip that I lead right here in Telegraph Hill, North Beach and the waterfront. For more details on when and where to meet, visit the Golden Gate Audubon Society website at <http://www.goldengateaudubon.org> or feel free to contact me at arregloc@gmail.com. Thanks and hope to see you out and around the Hill!



NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY REPORT

By Mike Madrid

Many residents of North Beach and Telegraph Hill love the fact that our neighborhood feels like a small town set in the midst of a big city. We have to remember, however, that we *do* live in a big city. Unfortunately, one of the realities of city life is crime. Over the past few months, there have been a number of incidents involving robberies, particularly in the Telegraph Hill area. While it is always alarming to hear this kind of news, it is good to be aware of what is going on in the neighborhood and important to take some precautions to avoid becoming a crime victim.

Some of the more remote areas of Telegraph Hill provide thieves with places to hide and observe the activity of residents. Several incidents reported to Central Station police have involved the same suspects. This means that these people are working the area on a consistent basis and are keeping track of residents' comings and goings. There was an incident in December where two men entered a house on a Friday night,

presumably to rob it. They were surprised to find the owner at home, which means they had been watching the location for some time. Recently, another Telegraph Hill resident reported his front-door lock had been broken, and there were other signs of attempted break-in. This, too, occurred while the resident was at home.

There have also been reports of people claiming to be selling magazine subscriptions in order to gain access to buildings. If you live in a large building with several units, do not buzz in these people. Instead, call the police and report the incident. These people have been working Russian Hill, and police have been able to get a photograph of the suspect.

Many of us enjoy the convenience of online shopping. However, deliveries of online orders sometimes provide thieves opportunities to commit crimes. They have been able to gain access to buildings by slipping in after a delivery person enters. Once inside, thieves can break-into apartments or residents' cars. In some cases, they have stolen packages that were left by the delivery

person. If you live in a large apartment complex, make sure that your property manager is taking precautions to keep unwanted persons out of the building.

I spoke with Capt. Garrett Tom at Central Station to see what precautions people should take to prevent robberies. First off, residents should lock their doors, even when they are at home. We all like to think that we live in a very safe community, but these recent incidents have shown many of these thieves are very bold. Some will try to break-in even if the resident is at home. Also make sure that your bicycles are well secured, even when you are at home.

Capt. Tom also noted that lighting is very important. Thieves look for dark places to hide, so keeping your property well lit will provide them fewer opportunities. If you don't like having a light on all night, motion-detector lights are a good option. Because many neighborhood residents travel quite a bit, an alarm system or security cameras are also worth considering.

continued on page 13

LOCAL ADVANTAGE

SPECIAL OFFERS JUST FOR LOCALS



Join Local Advantage for discounts at participating PIER 39 restaurants, shops and attractions*! Download your coupons at pier39.com/LocalAdvantage.

Not a local? Get a FREE Savings Fun Pack.

Visit the California Welcome Center on Level 2 for discounts to PIER 39 restaurants, shops and attractions.



*Some restrictions apply. See coupons for details.

THE WILD HEART OF TELEGRAPH HILL

By Judy Irving

This is the second in a new series about wildlife on the Hill. If you have a problem with wildlife, please do not harass, trap, or kill the animal. Contact WildCare San Rafael's "Wildlife Solutions" at (415) 456-7283 for help.

Hérons: Here's an update on the black-crowned night herons from Marcy Albert, a resident of 101 Lombard: "I enjoyed your note in The Semaphore about the night herons in the lawn at the Embarcadero between Chestnut and Francisco. We walk our dog

down Montgomery to Hillstone, then on around and through that lawn pretty much every night, and have seen the Heron family many times over our eight years here. They are most present just after a rain, snacking on all the yummy stuff that comes up through the lawn. They are not particularly afraid of us, though the younger ones are less tolerant than the older ones. Last year, they had three chicks. I have only seen the older one and either his mate or a younger one, who is more skittish than he (or she?). It took us a really long time

to figure out what they were. It's lovely to see them most nights, and we consider them 'our' herons!"

* * *

Coyote: I asked Marcy about the coyote, and she put my husband, Mark Bittner, and me in touch with Matthew Barton, a 10-year resident of 220 Lombard, who knows the critter well. We met Matthew at the corner of Lombard and Montgomery one night around 9:30p.m., and sure enough, there on the steep hillside above us was the coyote! Mark took a quick photo, and a few seconds later, she was gone. I say "she" because Matthew, who has seen the coyote many times over the past few years, thinks she's a she, and might be a former pup that grew up on the Hill. I read that usually more than half of coyote pups don't survive to adulthood, so if she's a born-and-bred Hill dweller, that's very cool. Matthew once saw her trot right down the middle of Lombard toward Sansome. Another night, he saw her trail a couple who were walking to their car. They never turned around. People have noticed that there are fewer rodents in the area now, and it makes sense that tree rats, which are also nocturnal, might be a big part of the coyote's diet. Matthew said she's basically indifferent to people, but is very interested in small dogs! People have been more careful about keeping dogs on leashes and keeping cats indoors. Some think there are three coyotes here, some think one. We only saw one that night,

continued on page 14

Neighborhood Safety continued from page 12

If you are the victim of a crime, you should always report it. If you see suspicious behavior in your area, you should report it as well. The non-emergency phone number for the San Francisco Police Department is: **415 553-0123**

People often ask why their area can't get an officer patrolling on a regular basis. Unfortunately, the San Francisco Police Department is understaffed across the city. The Police Academy is training officers, but it is estimated that the force will not be fully staffed until 2017. Our local police will always try to patrol areas that are experiencing problems, which is why it is important to report any suspicious behavior. You know your neighborhood best, and you know if something doesn't look right. Central Station police need area resi-

dents to be their partners in preventing crime.

It's also good to stay in touch with your neighbors. Many North Beach residents have set up e-mail groups with neighbors so that they can share information. Or you can contact San Francisco SAFE to help you set up a Neighborhood Watch (www.sfsafe.org). Some areas of the neighborhood have also hired private security to make regular patrols in order to prevent criminal behavior. These are just some of the things that you can do with your neighbors to make your local area safer.

If you have any questions or issues that you would like me to address at future Community Police Advisory Board meetings, feel free to e-mail me at Mike.Madrid@thd.org





By Richard Zimmerman

The Art & Culture Committee supports the neighborhood's artistic community by providing opportunities to local artists as well as those who exhibit art. The committee sponsors events that foster cooperation in the artistic community within Telegraph Hill and North Beach.

In recent months, we sponsored three successful events. The first, "Behind the Plank," featured bar owners and bartenders in a round-table discussion of their views of the business. Committee members Carol Peterson, who recruited the outstanding panel, Julie Jaycox, Lynn Rabinowitsh and Kathy Bischak deserve mention for their efforts to put together this successful salon. A special thank you to Zach Stewart, who generously donated Canessa Gallery as the venue for the salon.

The committee also co-sponsored the 80th anniversary party for Coit Tower at Live Worms Gallery. Committee member Julie Jaycox, along with Jenny Morningstar, curated the art exhibited for the show. Thanks to them and to Protect Coit Tower for sponsoring this successful event.

Our second salon featured best-selling author Susan Wels reviewing her book, "Arts for the City." This salon took place just at press time, so look for a more extensive report on the Art & Culture webpage (thd.org/art-and-culture). Thanks to committee members Steve Rabinowitsh, Jen Haeusser and Melissa Karam for their help in planning the event.

ART & CULTURE

Special Exhibition

Former THD board member and Beautification Committee Chair Jan Holloway and her husband Maurice Holloway are showing artwork from their private collection. The exhibit, "Good Times — Bad Times," at the Thomas Reynolds Gallery, features historic paintings, prints, drawings, photographs and sculpture from the early 20th century. Much of the art features our neighborhood. The work will be on display until April 19.

New Galleries

The neighborhood art scene continues to thrive with the addition of two new galleries. Mary and Dan Madrigal opened TH(e) Gallery at 491 Greenwich. The extensively remodeled gallery is the former location of Robert Sexton Gallery. The gallery is designed to be an intimate venue for everyone to experience, discover and access art. Telegraph Hill Gallery wants to be a destination gallery for both the neighborhood and San Francisco visitors.

This is the Madrigals' first gallery; they are excited about the experience and look forward to discovering new artists as well as exhibiting established artists. They will exhibit artists working in diverse practices, including painting, photography, drawing, sculpture, multidimensional hybrid media and video. In the coming months, they will sponsor art-related events at the gallery; watch the gallery website — telegraphhillgallery.com — for news.

The Glass Door Gallery is located at 245-B Columbus. Co-owned by artists Kate Simmons and Igor Capibaribe, the gallery features contemporary fine art, including painting, sculpture, photography and mixed media.

The gallery goes beyond displaying art by sponsoring events and classes for the community. The gallery served as a venue for several events for LitQuake 2013. A "pop-up" yoga class takes place at the gallery, as do other events that serve to connect with the community.

Simmons and Capibaribe want to integrate technology into art pieces to disseminate information about the work electronically. They are careful to point out that they want to use technology to aid the artists in communicating intent; technology will not shape the art.

Learn more about the Glass Door Gallery at glassdoorgallery.com.

Future events

The committee is planning a new show, "Digital Flash Art." This show will feature a slide show of digital photographs of our neighborhood taken in the 24-hour period before the show. The timing of this event is still to be decided as is the exact format. Come to our next meeting to help plan and work with us on this exciting event. See our webpage (thd.org/art-and-culture) for details on the next meeting.



The Wild Heart of Telegraph Hill continued from page 13

but it was a magical sight. I've never lived near a coyote before, not even when I lived in Alaska for three years. Has anyone ever heard her howl? Matthew hasn't. Yet.

Try it yourself: join the night owls and dog walkers who often hang out at the corner of Lombard and Montgomery around 10p.m., or later, and you might catch a glimpse of that wild heart. You might also see Craig Fenton and his dog Bailey. If you do, you're lucky, because Craig has a high-powered flashlight that he shines on the coyote so she's more visible. Or you could try coming out on a full moon night, such as April 15 or May 15.

The Buzz on the Bees: There are wild bees on our Hill, too. Here's a report from beekeeper and Filbert Steps resident Kate McGee:

"We have three hives on the public right-of-way along the Greenwich Steps. The one to the far right as you are facing the hives is the oldest hive on the Hill, purchased from a Buddhist monk, three years ago. True to its origins, this hive is the gentlest hive we have. The bees from this hive have never stung me and have been great producers of honey. We call it the Buddha

hive. The one adjacent and to the left of the Buddha hive is new as of last year. These bees come from a San Francisco beekeeper who lives in Glen Park. The one furthest to the left and closest to the steps is our North Beach Native hive. This hive was created from the Buddha hive and mated with drones (male bees) from the area. It too had the mellow demeanor of the Buddha hive and was genetically diverse -- producing dark and light colored bees.

"The hives are generally not opened during the winter months (October-March), but given the dry year, I checked in on the hives a month earlier than normal and here is the latest news: The Buddha hive is queenless. After living for three, possibly four years, the queen has died and the hive has not been able to create a new queen. The worker bees are laying eggs in a futile attempt to let the hive survive. Worker bees can only lay unfertilized eggs, and therefore only male bees are being created in this hive. In an attempt to save this hive, eggs from the Glen Park hive were placed in the Buddha hive. These eggs had to be less than three days old and will hopefully be fed royal jelly by the remaining female worker bees so that they will produce a new queen.

If they are successful in doing this, then this queen will need to mate with drones, return to the hive, and replenish it by laying new fertilized eggs. We shall see. I'll check back in a month.

"The Glen Park hive is doing fine. The population of the hive is small, but the bees are healthy. Unfortunately, the North Beach Natives are gone. The entire hive is filled with honey, but there is not a single bee in sight. I am not sure why they fled, but I will try to restart this hive with another split — hopefully from the Buddha hive. Depending on the weather, we will



Coyote on Telegraph Hill near the corner of Lombard and Montgomery streets, Tuesday night, Feb. 18, 2014.

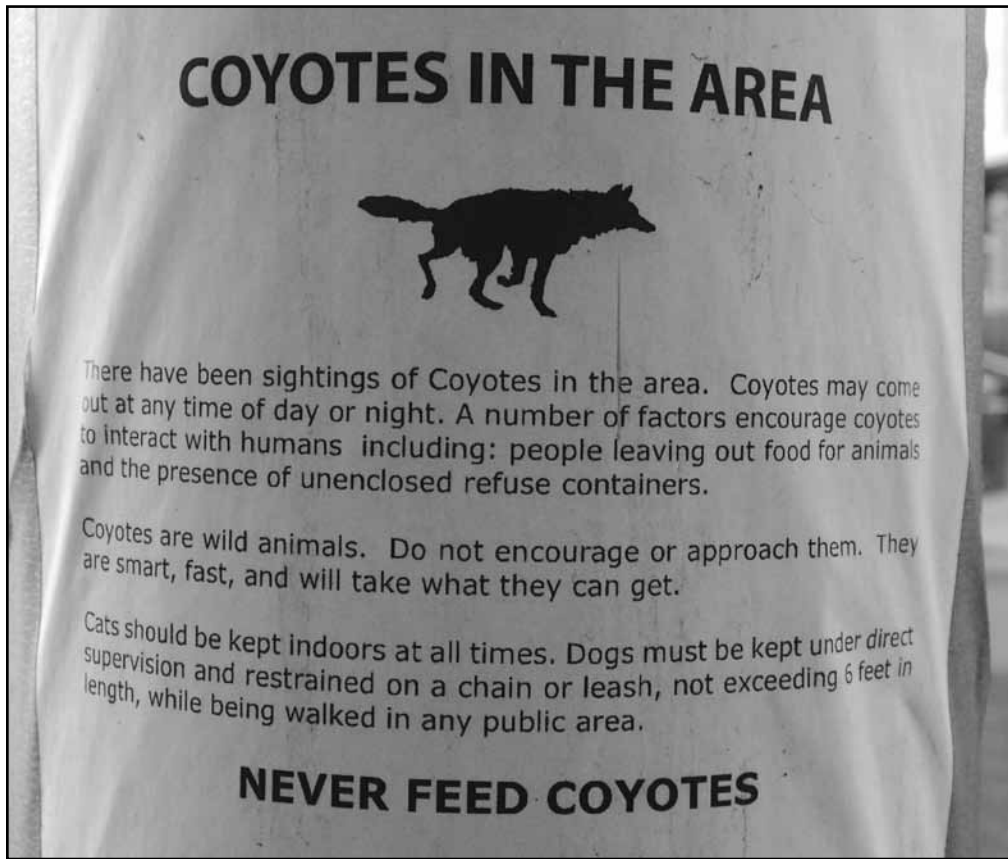
PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK BITTNER

try to restart this hive in a month or so.

"For the first time ever, I harvested honey in February. The Buddha and North Beach Natives hives were filled with honey. This is very rare and I suspect it has to do with the dry winter season. Normally, hives are running out of honey at this time of year, anxiously awaiting the spring nectar flow. This winter honey is medium in color and has a slight eucalyptus taste to it."

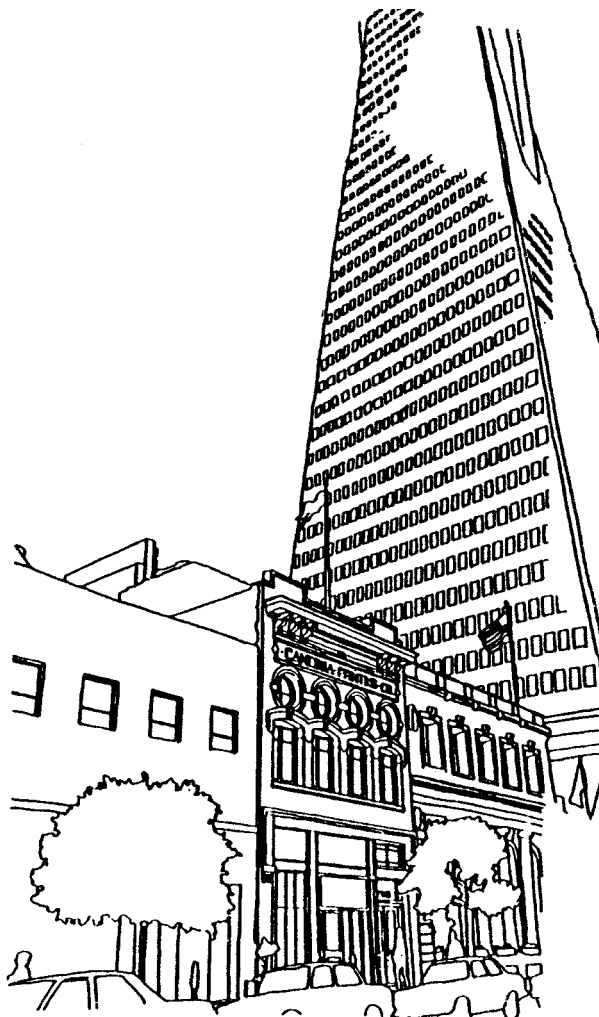
We join a growing national movement that recognizes urban areas as havens for wildlife: See the "Nature of Cities" blog <http://www.thenatureofcities.com/> and the Biophilic Cities Network: <http://biophiliccities.org/the-biophilic-cities-project/>, which is devoted to integrating the natural world into urban life.

If you have a wildlife story or photo you'd like to share, please send to **Judy Irving, Co-Chair of THD's Parks, Trees & Birds Committee:** films@pelicanmedia.org.



Sign taped on a pole at the corner of Lombard and Montgomery streets where the best "coyote sightings" take place.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JUDY IRVING



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THD ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DINNER & ELECTION NIGHT

Save the date of April 21, 2014 for THD's annual membership dinner and election night.

We will have a lovely dinner, a great speaker, and confirmation of our new 2014 THD board members.

Location will be the San Francisco Italian Athletic Club at 1630 Stockton Street, San Francisco.

More details will be available soon at the THD website, www.thd.org

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THD COMMITTEES NEED YOU

Get involved in our neighborhood and make a difference! Contact a THD committee and help keep the Hill a special place to live.

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Visit the THD website to explore a wealth of neighborhood history and get the latest information about what's happening on the Hill.

TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS

Schedules of Committee Meetings

PLANNING & ZONING: Last Thursdays. Call for time and location. 986-7070, 563-3494, 391-5652.

Look to the THD website for information on THD events. **Log on to <http://www.thd.org>**

THD Welcomes New Members JOIN NOW

NEW MEMBER INFORMATION

For a Voice in Your Neighborhood Join Telegraph Hill Dwellers.

Sign Up or Sign a Friend Up as a member of Telegraph Hill Dwellers. Complete and mail to THD, PO Box 330159, SF, CA 94133

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FEATURES

The New North Beach Library	1	History Expo Has Record Attendance and THD Was There!	10
Obituary for Masha Zakheim	3	NEXTVillage	11
When the Cockettes Played the Palace	4	New Restrooms for Washington Square	11
Obituary for Masha Zakheim (by Carl Nolte)	4	Restaurant Review: Pisto's Tacos	12
When the Committee Was in Session	5	Neighborhood Safety Report	12
Spring in the Grace Marchant Garden	6	The Wild Heart of Telegraph Hill	13
Update on North Beach Historical, Architectural & Cultural Survey	7		

COLUMNS	THD BUSINESS
From the Editor	Board of Directors
Waterfront Committee Report	THD Committees
From the Desk of Supervisor Chiu	Membership Info
Parks,Trees & Birds Committee Report	Cover:
Art & Culture Committee Report	

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Update on North Beach Historical, Architectural & Cultural Survey See Pages 7-10